

(U//FOUO) Threats to unmanned aerial vehicles



TOP SECRET//SI//TK//NOFORN

(C) Employment of [unmanned aerial vehicles](#) (UAV) has increased in recent years. **Threats to UAVs** fall into several categories. These include traditional [air defense](#) threats from [anti-aircraft artillery](#), [surface-to-air missiles](#), and [fighter aircraft](#). However, additional threats have been identified which could interfere with UAV operational capabilities.

Additionally, environmental factors such as [terrestrial weather](#) and [space weather](#) also play an essential role in ensuring successful UAV operations. Finally, because use of UAVs garners public attention and creates a perception of new technology and unprecedented capability, propagandists and citizens with legitimate social agendas may employ legal and media venues in such a way that UAV operations could be brought under increased scrutiny, perceived to be illegitimate, openly resisted or undermined.

(U) Propaganda

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- (U) UAVs represent new technology, which draws interest whenever and wherever UAVs are employed. Adversaries have developed [propaganda](#) campaigns that target UAV use.
- (C) It may be worthwhile for UAV planners and operations personnel to work closely with [Public Affairs Office](#) representatives to "war-game" and plan strategies to counter potential counter-UAV propaganda.

(U) Adversary Propaganda Themes

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- (U) Examples of potential propaganda themes that could be employed against UAV operations include, but are not limited to:
 - (C) **Remote Control:** Due to the remote-control nature of UAV operations, they are less trustworthy (or less safe, less honorable, less precise) than other forms of warfare. To reduce these perceptions, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. Norton Schwartz, prefers to call UAVs "remotely piloted vehicles," in part to communicate the "man-in-the-loop" nature of the crews who control UAV operations.^{[15] [16] [17]}
 - (C) **Law of War Challenges.** Recent articles in pro-jihad newspapers in [Karachi](#), [Pakistan](#) alleged that drones were employing [chemical weapons](#) and [biological weapons](#) in the [Pakistan-Afghanistan border region](#).^[18]
 - (U) **Sovereignty.** Pakistan's government officials are forced to walk a fine line between a populace perceiving violations of Pakistan's [sovereignty](#), and international demands for action. For public Pakistani consumption, media and government officials often express official outrage at violations of airspace, sovereignty and collateral damage.^[19]
 - (U) **Leverage Collateral Damage.** [Taliban](#) and [al-Qaeda](#) have repeatedly alleged that civilians were killed in UAV strikes. It can be expected that such charges of [collateral damage](#) will be levied, regardless of the accuracy of any attack conducted. In some cases, Taliban members have forced civilians into the same structures, or prevented civilians from departing in order to confront planners and operations personnel with "lose-lose situations."^[20] These and similar [human shield](#) tactics have been cynically termed "Taliban air defense."^[21] The aircraft target Al Qaeda and the Taliban and minimize civilian deaths, U.S. officials say.^[22]
- (U) **Nationality of Target vs. Due Process.** Attacks against American and European persons who have become violent extremists are often criticized by propagandists, arguing that lethal action against these individuals deprives them of due process.^[30]

- (U) **Drone Strike: A loaded term.** Use of the term "drone strike" evokes many things to English-speaking audiences, which may invoke in an emotional reaction. This is what propaganda intends to do. Drones connote mindless automatons with no capability for independent thought or action. Strikes connote a first attack, which leaves the victim unable to respond. Other phrases employed to evoke an emotional response include "Kill List," "Hit Squads," "Robot Warfare," or "Aerial Assassins." The most effective of these terms play on popular terms, including movie titles, television shows, song lyrics, or literature. In reality, there are many aspects to the employment of UAVs to carry out lethal operations against human targets. One potential means of reducing or eliminating the emotionally-charged and evocative aspects of discussions about UAV employment is to elevate the conversation onto the issues which lie at the heart of counterterrorist operations. When a person with opposing opinion asks about "drone strikes," it may be of benefit to discuss the larger issues which are touched on by lethal UAV operations. These include:
 - (U) International Law
 - (U) Military Actions on Sovereign Territory, Airspace or in the Maritime Domain.
 - (U) Inherent Right of Self-Defense
 - (U) Pre-emptive and Preventive Military Action
 - (U) Law of Armed Conflict
 - (U) Lethal Operations Against Enemies During War
 - (U) Lawful Combatants: what constitutes a lawful combatant?
 - (U) Historic Use of Unmanned Weapons. Point out that unmanned weapons date back to naval and land mines (1800s), torpedoes (1800s), and artillery shells. Unmanned weapons increased in lethality, precision and range with the advent of rockets, guided missiles, and precision guided munitions. The first armed UAV, The Kettering Bug, flew in 1918 and was planned to be used in World War One if the conflict had continued into 1919.
 - (U) Due Process for US Citizens
 - (U) Human Rights
 - (U) Military Tactics vs. Concepts of "Fair Play" or "Sportsmanship"